
Federal Agency and Federal Library Reports

National Commission on Libraries and Information Science

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During 1984, the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) continued to pursue its overall goal to provide equal opportunity of access to library and information services for all Americans. The commission's major programs for the year placed particular emphasis on the importance of library and information services in a learning society, the improvement of access to information for special populations (such as elderly persons, rural and urban residents, and functional illiterates), the role of information in building a more productive society, and library/information policy and planning activities.

The nomination of Bessie Boehm Moore by President Reagan for reappointment to the commission was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate in March 1984. (Dr. Moore has been a member of NCLIS for the past 14 years and has served as vice chairman since 1972.) Also nominated for five-year terms on the commission were Margaret Phelan, owner of Phelan Business Research in Shawnee Mission, Kansas; Wanda Forbes, Clover, South Carolina, a member of the advisory council to the Museum of Education of the University of South Carolina; Patricia Barbour, Dearborn, Michigan, who serves on the National Advisory Council on Community Education and the Executive Board of the American Research Institute; and Daniel W. Casey, Syracuse, New York, a member of the American Library Association Council and former NCLIS commissioner.

Major NCLIS Programs, 1984

Library/Information Services in a Learning Society

At its January 1984 meeting, the commission unanimously adopted a statement drafted by an NCLIS ad hoc committee established to study *A Nation at Risk*, the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The NCLIS statement notes a significant gap in the report: the omission of reference "both to the importance of library and

information resources to underpin all of learning *and* to the essential skills and proficiencies involved in finding and using information effectively." The statement urges that all students be provided with effective school library media services of strong quality by personnel who are well qualified in library and information science and able to teach information skills and manage library resources in their schools. This statement forms a basis for the commission's plans to promote a nationwide commitment to develop effective skills for finding and using information in 1985. The commission was also represented at each of the regional seminars sponsored by the Department of Education to identify the most effective role for libraries in responding to *A Nation at Risk* and fostering excellence in education.

In the area of library and information science education, NCLIS called together an informal Roundtable on Support for Education of Library and Information Professionals. The new group will help foster communication among educators, industry leaders, and others to increase private sector support for educational programs in the library/information field. The roundtable has appointed a small action group to review existing recruitment material and study possibilities for cooperative development of new material. Also, during its April meeting NCLIS voted to endorse, support, and recognize the important work of the National Council on Quality Continuing Library and Information Science Education.

Access to Information for Special Populations

During 1984 NCLIS placed considerable emphasis on helping to understand and meet the library and information needs of special populations. In particular, the commission focused on the needs of the elderly, the functionally illiterate, and rural residents.

Older Americans

"U.S. Population Characteristics: Implications for Libraries," a study of demographic changes in our society and their relation to new and evolving information needs published in the September issue of the *Wilson Library Bulletin*, underscores the dramatic increase in the number of persons age 65 and older in the United States. To better meet the specialized information needs of this significant population group, the Commission is working with the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies and other groups to survey the current state of library/information services to older Americans. NCLIS has also signed a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Administration on Aging to work cooperatively at the federal level to promote improved library and information services to the aging.

The Functionally Illiterate

NCLIS is helping to tackle the massive problem of functional illiteracy in the United States through a new program undertaken jointly with the Department of Defense. Working with the U.S. Army Human Engineering Laboratory in an innovative technology transfer project, NCLIS helped launch two initial library demonstration sites where a computer-assisted instruction program developed by the Naval Research Development Center is being tested with adults and out-of-school teenagers who lack basic reading skills. The two libraries currently participating in the project are the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland, and the Mary Weir Library, Weirton, West Virginia. Expansion of the program to Pittsburgh is under consideration. NCLIS also continues to

work closely with the Coalition for Literacy and with Mrs. George (Barbara) Bush in her literacy efforts.

Rural Populations

The specialized library and information needs of our rural residents have been an NCLIS concern for many years. During 1984, the commission made progress in its National Library and Information Services Development Program by taking steps to establish a National Advisory Board on Rural Information Needs and by publishing, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, the proceedings of a joint congressional hearing on "The Changing Information Needs of Rural America—The Role of Libraries and Information Technology."

Other Access-Related Areas

Another 1984 NCLIS publication helped promote access to a specialized but extremely useful kind of information: data derived from the nation's weather and land-sensing satellites. The 47-page report of the NCLIS Blue Ribbon Panel on the Information Policy Implications of Archiving Satellite Data addresses the issues relating to archiving of satellite-generated information. The blue ribbon panel was an outgrowth of a presidential directive to the secretary of commerce to transfer to the private sector, by competitive means, the current civil remote sensing systems. NCLIS was asked to address the issues relevant to archiving of the satellite data and to provide guidance on archiving requirements for potential bidders. The panel placed great emphasis on the importance of protecting the needs of the public and ensuring continued access to the data. This report was also used by Congress in the development of part of the Land Remote Sensing Commercialization Act of 1984 (PL 98-365).

In another access-related area, NCLIS began an investigation into the role of fees in supporting library and information services in public and academic libraries. In progress is a study to determine the extent to which fees are charged, the services for which they are charged, and the number of libraries charging for services.

Improving Productivity in the Information Age

In July 1984, NCLIS cosponsored the first U.S./U.K. Seminar on Information and Productivity in conjunction with the British Library Research and Development Department and the Library and Information Services Council of the United Kingdom. [This and other NCLIS work in the program area of information and productivity are fully discussed in the special report "Information and Productivity" by Toni Carbo Bearman in Part 1 of this volume—*Ed.*] In a related area, NCLIS is coordinating a working information center/theme exhibit for the IFLA 1985 conference to be held in Chicago in August. The center will demonstrate a wide range of existing technologies appropriate to a small information center and provide needed information and materials to conference attendees. Development of the center is made possible through public/private sector cooperation.

Policy and Planning Activities

Working closely with the library/information community, NCLIS continued its work to fulfill its mandate to advise the executive and legislative branches on matters relating to national library and information policies and plans. The commission provided technical

advice and assistance to members and committees of Congress on legislation relating to libraries and information. NCLIS intensified its work with several agencies of the executive branch, for example: on the Commerce Department satellite data project mentioned earlier; on projects with the Department of Education; and advisory work with the State Department on matters relating to UNESCO information programs.

The international information arena was of particular concern to NCLIS during 1984 because of the U.S. decision to withdraw from UNESCO and the need to devise alternative mechanisms to further international library and information related programs of interest to the United States. NCLIS worked with the U.S. National Committee for the UNESCO General Information Program (PGI) to draft a proposal for such alternative mechanisms, and the NCLIS executive director headed the U.S. delegation to the UNESCO PGI Intergovernmental Council Meeting in November. [See the report "Trends and Issues in the International Library and Information Communities," by Thomas J. Galvin, in the Special Reports section of Part 1—*Ed.*]

Some Future Plans

The commission will continue its work in the major program areas that were emphasized in 1984, with increased focus on such areas as national information policy and the development of skills for finding and using information. At the request of Congress, NCLIS will conduct a brief study to provide an overview of the extent of censorship in American libraries, the societal responses to it, and general censorship trends during the past decade with regard to public and school libraries. The commission will also work with the White House Conference on Library and Information Services Task Force to plan for a 1989 national conference on library and information services.